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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an overview of a comprehensive program for the educational and vocational counseling of university freshmen. The program, now in operation in University College, The Ohio State University, has evolved out of a need to provide quality services to great numbers of students. Effective methods have been developed to assist students through initial developmental stages of their college experience. Any part of this program is adaptable for use in a college or university of any size. Integrated services included in this model are: pre-entry counseling; a first quarter orientation and adjustment course for credit; individual academic advisement; aids for helping students in academic difficulty; career counseling; placement awareness; and a community based freshman field experience course and career information program. Also included are methods for interfacing with faculty and degree units, a training program and credit course for academic advisers, and an organizational model for delivering these services. (Author)

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A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN

Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association; Washington, D.C. March 19 - 23, 1978.

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A Comprehenisve Program of Academic Advising and Career Development for University Freshmen

Drs. Virginia Gordon, Lance Shreffler, Joseph Weaver

The purpose of this paper is to present a model and a description of a comprehensive academic advisement program for 17,000 freshman and sophomore students at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Although we serve large numbers of students, our methods and programs are adaptable to most college or university settings.

The Setting

The Ohio State University is a large open access university. Each year about 10,000 students enroll as freshmen at Ohio State. These students enter the University through University College (UVC) which is the initial college of enrollment. University College's major function is to provide academic advisement during the freshmen and sophomore years. Each student is assigned an academic adviser who is a specialist in the academic area he or she chooses. University College's broader purposes include assisting students in understanding the importance of life-long career planning, providing them with the basic knowledge of degree programs, assisting them in planning quarterly schedules, and helping them develop an appreciation for the nature of scholarly endeavor. University College advisers serve as clearinghouses for information about University and community resources and act as a referral source as needed. Students are recognized as developing persons and as advisers work with individual students, the unique personal qualities and experiences they bring to the University are seen within this context.

The Model

Students entering University College are required to attend an orientation, testing and scheduling program (OTS) before their first quarter. At this point, the student chooses one of the twenty curricular academic programs (CAP) the College offers. Nineteen of these curricular programs are directly tied to a degree-granting unit, e.g. Engineering, Allied Medicine, Education, Agriculture. Those students wishing to explore before making a commitment to an academic program are enrolled in the General Baccalaureate Curriculum.

During the orientation program, students are given placement tests and helped to build a schedule for their first quarter. They are assigned to a specific academic adviser at this time. Students who are exploring are assigned to an adviser who is a generalist in all academic areas and trained in career development and decision-making strategies.

All new students are enrolled in a one-credit hour orientation course which extends the orientation and adjustment process during the first quarter at the University and provides specific information about the curricular area they have chosen. The course will be described in more detail later in this presentation. During orientation, students are given a preliminary introduction to the University and its resources.

Academic Advisers

Academic Advisers in University College are grouped by the curricular program they advise. Their work and the flow of information from degree units are supervised by a coordinator who acts as a direct liaison between University College and the degree-granting colleges for which he or she is responsible.

Advisers in University College are graduate students who are often in academic programs in the same college as the students they are advising. Most advisers are doctoral candidates who contract to work for UVC for a minimum of two years. They work either 20 or 30 hours per week and their student load is adjusted accordingly.

University College places high priority on the selection and training of advisers since the program will succeed or fail at this level. Advisers are chosen for their communication skills, their academic experience, work experience, including teaching and/or counseling, and their ability to relate to undergraduate students.

The Training of Advisers

Two weeks prior to the opening of Autumn Quarter, an intense training program is offered to new academic advisers. The objectives of the training program include helping advisers to:

a. Understand how to work in a complex organizational setting.

b. Understand students as developing, maturing individuals.

c. Learn the systematic procedures necessary to the process of academic advising.

d. Learn the requirements, priorities and options of the particular academic program to which the advisers have been assigned.

e. Understand student services and other campus resources available to students.

f. Learn the guidelines for planning the University College Survey course.

g. Understanding the criteria by which advisers are evaluated.

These objectives are accomplished through large and small group settings, role playing, individualized conferences, simulations, and tours.

Adviser training continues on a regular basis through quarterly in-service workshops. Workshop topics include a wide range of issues relative to academic advising, e.g. job opportunities for college graduates, sex-role stereotyping, working with students in academic difficulty, understanding of transcripts, career development, and others.

An advisers' library has been established to provide written resources useful to the advising process. Included are printed materials on topics such as higher education, student and career development, occupational information, study skills, and journals and periodicals from specific fields, such as counseling and the health areas.

A graduate level credit course on academic advising is offered to UVC advisers in Autumn Quarter for those who wish to expand their skills and depth of knowledge. Six major topics are covered: college teaching, the academic advising process, college student characteristics and development, career development, and University organization.

Pre-Entry Counseling and Advising

Pre-entry advising and counseling take several forms at Ohio State. Degree colleges often provide "career days", tours, or special programs for high school students. Individual students may use the academic advisement services of University

College for academic exploration before enrolling. The orientation program provides the opportunity to take a variety of proficiency examinations so that students may receive academic credit for work in which they already have competence.

Honors Program

Several special programs for prospective honors students and their parents are held every year. A special day of academic information is offered to the National Merit Scholars who have indicated Ohio State as one of their choices. Top students from all high schools in the Columbus metropolitan area are invited to an evening program where they can meet with faculty and academic advisers to explore the University's varied academic programs.

Pre-Entry Career Planning Workshops

Those students who indicate that they plan to enroll in the General Baccalaureate Curriculum, the exploratory CAP within University College, are offered a one day optional career planning workshop prior to their attending the regular orientation program. These workshops are held on the Columbus campus and OSU's four regional campuses. Students are encouraged to enroll in the workshop closest to their home community.

The workshop content includes academic and career information and self-assessment activities. A detailed outline of the workshop is available. Research on the students attending the workshop indicates that those who took part in the pre-orientation program made decisions earlier about a major choice and their decisions tended to be more stable than a comparable group of undecided students.

Pre-Orientation Program for High School Students

For the past several years, two of the largest feeder high schools in the state have requested an orientation for their seniors enrolling at the University. The workshops are held in late spring and early fall. Almost one hundred students attended and their responses have been very positive and enthusiastic. Students reported they felt more confident about entering the University and the many myths and mysteries about the University were clarified or dispelled.

Interface with Degree Units, Faculty and Campus Resources

As mentioned earlier, there is a coordinator for each of the curricular academic programs (CAP) in University College. The coordinator serves as the liaison with the degree College and acts as the direct informational link between the personnel in University College and the degree-granting units faculty, administrators and counselors. For example, the UVC coordinator for Administrative Science meets on a weekly basis with the academic Associate Dean and the Counseling Staff of that College. Curricular changes are explored and that information is transmitted through coordinator and CAP adviser staff meetings. There are several joint staff meetings each year with the counseling staffs of University College and Administrative Science. Advisers are encouraged to routinely ask questions of the degree unit staff when the situation warrants. An advisement manual provides a detailed curriculum plan which UVC advisers use in their daily contact with students. In addition, planning sheets are devised for the majors in a given academic college. These are used directly with students and are constantly updated. Students are encouraged to utilize the faculty, counselors, and other degree unit personnel in addition to their UVC adviser.

Interface with Community Resources

In addition to academic and student service resources on the campus, students are informed about the wide variety of resources that are available in the community. The University is located in the heart of a large metropolitan area. Through programs such as Partners in Education, an alumni-based career information service, students are encouraged to avail themselves of the resources in the community. The area contains a large number and variety of libraries, other educational institutions, health centers, social agencies, religious affairs centers, and counseling centers. The University operates a large student-volunteer center which links agencies in the community to students who wish to offer their services or wish to obtain experience in a specific field.

Philosophy of the Advisement Program

The purpose and objectives of University College's advisement program support the University's mission in the area of undergraduate instruction. They are as follows:

1. To serve as the college of enrollment for all freshmen and many sophomores.
2. To administer a program of academic advisement for all freshmen and some sophomores in consultation and cooperation with degree-granting colleges and schools.
3. To develop, coordinate and implement various educational and career exploration opportunities for University College students.
4. To administer the Developmental Education program for selected University College students who need special academic help and counseling.
5. To administer an orientation program for new UVC students.
6. To assist in the development of experimental introductory courses of instruction.

The primary mission of University College, therefore, is to assist lower division students in exploring educational and career opportunities, in developing basic techniques of study, and in planning an academic program. The College works closely with the degree-granting colleges and schools and other administrative support units in carrying out its assigned mission.

The Academic Advisement Process

The advisement program of University College is based upon developmental concepts and theory. The diverse needs and interests of students are assessed and recognized as primary determinants for program development and implementation.

Although eighty percent of the students entering the University make a specific educational choice, our research indicates that their initial choices are very tentative (Gordon, 1976). Levels of educational and career commitment tend to change drastically as freshmen progress through their first academic year. We view such changes as a natural outcome of a developmental educational and career decision-making process. A student may change academic programs within University College with a minimum amount of paper work.

If a student requests a change of curricular program, he or she may consult with an adviser in the new area and receive appropriate information on which to base a decision. After deciding to change, the student is assigned to an adviser in the new CAP.

Students remain in UVC until they have met the academic criteria to transfer into a degree-granting College. Although the academic advisement program is centered in UVC, students have easy access to a large network of academic information and counseling throughout the University. Academic advisers are continually informed of new courses, course content, prerequisite changes, etc. through an established information system.

If students need services which are beyond the usual advisement function, such as extended career counseling or study skills assistance, the adviser refers them to the appropriate University agency. Advisers are sensitive to the many critical points of a student's experience which require referral to a professional who has the time, interest and expertise needed to accommodate the student's needs.

Special Groups of Students

Program development within University College is determined primarily by various student-oriented needs assessments. Academic advisers are encouraged to develop a broad range of educational, vocational, career and interpersonal skills which are considered prerequisites to the effective implementation of services for special groups.

Exploratory Students

When University College was established in the late 1960's, it was decided to provide the opportunity for students to explore or enter the University "undecided". This was a very different approach from the traditional requirement of forcing a student to make a decision about an academic major upon admission. This area, the General Baccalaureate Curriculum (GBC), is one of the twenty curricular academic programs offered to students in University College. To meet the diverse needs of the exploratory student, a variety of educational and career exploration programs are provided. GBC advisers are trained as generalists in academic information and are trained to offer career counseling services that are developmental in nature. GBC advisers are prepared to assist undecided

students with self-assessment, educational and career awareness, and decision-making techniques.

Our research has indicated that many students in University College require educational and career exploration opportunities. For example, many students who base an initial educational choice on little realistic information later find themselves confused and dissatisfied. As a result, GBC advisers often assist students from other curricular areas to reevaluate an initial decision or explore new ones.

Students In Academic Difficulty

During the Autumn Quarter of 1977, over 17,000 students were enrolled in University College. Of that number, 4300 students were identified as being in academic difficulty. Three thousand students placed themselves on academic warning and 1300 were on probation. These figures remain relatively constant over the years. Shreffler (1976) found that over a period of three quarters during 1974-75, only 2.5% of those students in academic difficulty were no longer in difficulty by their third quarter of enrollment. Only 21% of these students were still enrolled by the following spring quarter.

The magnitude of the problem is significant to the extent that University College has assumed a primary role in assisting its students who are experiencing academic difficulty. Upon acquiring a cumulative point hour ratio below a 2.00 average, the student is notified and encouraged to consult with his or her academic adviser. The adviser is prepared to develop and implement a process-oriented program of assistance that is phenomenological and developmental in nature.

The process of assisting students in academic difficulty consists of the following four phases: assessment, intervention, evaluation and follow-up. The programs of assistance are either referral-based or adviser based. Both formats attempt to be responsive to the entire range of etiological antecedents of academic difficulty. Resources frequently used are the Reading and Study Skills Center, the Counseling and Consultation Services, self-management and academic effectiveness courses and tutoring programs. Throughout the quarter the student meets with the adviser for the purposes of progress reports, continued assessment and reinforcement.

The counseling process is based on the premise that when individuals attempt to create change within themselves and their environment, they progress through a series of developmental growth stages. During each phase of the counseling process, the student is acquiring, developing, and refining attitudes and behavioral skills conductive to personal and academic effectiveness. The student begins to assume increased responsibility for his or her experience. The academic adviser becomes less directive and more consultive as the process progresses.

Older Adult Students

Older adults are enrolling in the University in increasing numbers. University College recognizes that this group has special needs and concerns and is beginning to program accordingly. Through in-service workshops, UVC advisers are made aware of the special needs of this group.

Special services offered older students include a section of the UVC Survey course, study skills workshops, career planning groups and classes. An evening office is maintained for those who need advising services after regular University office hours. Academic advisers working in this program are trained in adult development and are sensitive to the unique problems that older students have.

Developmental Education

The Office of Developmental Education meets the educational needs of students from disadvantaged environments who seek help in achieving academic and social success in college. The program provides special help for Afro-Americans, Appalachia whites, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians. Additional services offered through the program are available to any students who requests assistance in improving his or her adjustment to the academic community. Assistance includes a tutorial program, developmental courses, a center for developing reading and study skills, and referral to the appropriate campus agencies as needed. In addition to being assisted by an academic adviser-counselor, the student also receives support from a peer counselor program. Participation in the program is voluntary.

Honors Students

Students whose academic records indicate significant academic strength may take limited-enrollment courses taught by professors selected for their interest in and ability to challenge talented students. Honors opportunities in University College articulate high-school preparation with the rich resources of all academic areas of the University.

University College Survey Course

All new students entering University College are required to enroll in University College Survey 100, which is an orientation course for credit. This includes transfer students as well as first-quarter freshmen.

Academic advisers serving as instructors in this course are expected to develop the course with respect for the following four goals: (1) To familiarize students with requirements and opportunities pertinent to their educational and career goals, (2) To acquaint students with the procedures of the University - the minimum "how to" things that they need to know in order to add or drop courses, interpret grade reports, etc., (3) To acquaint students with the resources and services available to them at the University, and (4) To assist students to acquire the coping skills needed in a University environment such as effective study skills, knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, etc.

A textbook has been written for the course and instructors are provided an outline of the purposes and content of University Survey and are trained to teach it by their coordinator. A resource book with lesson plans and sample materials is given to the adviser who then organizes the class content. Each instructor is given the responsibility and flexibility to present the required material in the way he or she chooses.

Career Advising

Most academic advisers would agree that it is extremely difficult to separate educational advising from career advising. Students enter the University with different levels of decidedness about an academic major and/or career field. An effective academic adviser must be aware of students' varying levels of commitment to an educational or vocational choice since this information may be used to better understand where the

student is in the choice process. First, it will help the adviser and student decide what information needs to be gathered about both the student's capabilities and the career areas he or she is considering. Second, a more structured information-gathering plan can be initiated by the student.

The various levels of initial choice commitment which have been identified among entering University College freshmen (Gordon, 1977) are:

1. Those students definitely decided upon a career area. There are three types of students who publically commit themselves to a choice:
    a. Those who have carefully thought out their decision based on realistic knowledge about self and career area. These students often have had first hand experience within the field itself.
    b. Those who are definitely decided on a general career area but whose decision is based on little information about their capabilities or values, they often have very limited information or exposure to the career area itself.
    c. Those who are definitely decided upon a career area but are not sure of the specific opportunities within the field, e.g. those sure of business but not able to say if they wish marketing, accounting or finance.
2. Those who are tentatively decided on a specific career field but who do not have enough information about the field and/or their own abilities to commit themselves definitely to it.
3. Those interested in two or three career areas but need more time to explore in order to gather more information about the various alternatives and their own interests and abilities for these areas.
4. Those who are totally undecided. The reasons may be lack of readiness or motivation to begin the process of choosing, or a lack of information about self or career fields.

The recognition of levels, their etiology, and the types of interventions needed to move students along in the choice process are all important parts of the career advising process.

Understanding levels of choice commitment is especially helpful in alternative advising. Many students entering college make initial choices in programs in which there are selective admissions, e.g. the health areas. From the outset, UVC advisers encourage students to explore alternative programs in the event their initial choices are not realized. These students are helped to examine the attractive elements in their initial choices and are helped to analyze other career directions containing similar interests and values. In this way, students make the adjustment to new directions with a minimum of trauma and lost time.

Career Advising Programs

In University College, the career planning needs of students are served indirectly and directly in several ways. Academic advisers are trained to help students search for information and examine alternatives, while other methods are designed to involve students directly in programs and services.

Adviser training in career development and planning

As discussed earlier, academic advisers in University College are introduced to advising knowledge and skills during an intensive training period prior to their employment. Incorporated in this training program is a unit on career development which includes career choice theory and decision theory. Occupational information, a unit on the career advising process and career counseling and placement resources are also included. New advisers are taught to anticipate and recognize the differences in development and maturity among their advisees in the area of career choice.

Advisers in a given curricular program are knowledgeable about the career opportunities to which those majors may lead and learn to incorporate this information in their University College Survey course. They are also trained to use the American College Test Student Profile which is part of each student's record folder. This

profile includes an Interest Inventory which provides information for career exploration during individual advising interviews.

Direct student career advising programs

In addition to individual career advising, students are involved in career information and decision-making activities in the University Survey course which was discussed earlier. Students who have chosen a specific curricular program learn of the career opportunities in that area. Job market and placement information is also provided.

The survey course for exploring or undecided students contains a career development module which includes self-assessment, educational and occupational exploration activities. These components are taught within a decision-making framework. Undecided students are helped to explore in a structured, organized manner in the course.

Every quarter, information sessions about a wide variety of career fields are routinely offered. These sessions offer career information from both university and community resource people in a classroom setting. The number of sessions vary from 25 to 60 per quarter. These are widely publicized and advisers encourage their students to explore through them.

University College has a community-based career information program called Partners in Education. Almost 1000 alumni in the Columbus area have volunteered to participate in a "people bank" to provide students with first-hand information about their occupational fields. Students obtain the names of community workers from their academic adviser and make the initial contact. Partners have agreed to talk to students over the telephone, take them to lunch, or invite them to their work environment for a day. It is up to the student and the Partner to work out these arrangements. A seminar has been held for these community volunteers to prepare them for the types of questions students ask. Over 150 community Partners attended such a program last December on the campus.

Academic advisers in University College are evaluated in several different ways.

At the end of the first quarter, advisers are asked to assess themselves in the following areas:

1. Rapport with students - genuine concern, good listener, personal interest, ability to anticipate student needs.
2. Availability to students.
3. Rapport with co-workers - cooperation, professionalism.
4. Curricular competence - knowledge of academic programs, basic requirements, courses.
5. Procedural competence - knowledge, thoroughness, application.
6. Maintenance of student records - transactions noted, accuracy, consistency.
7. Teaching of University Survey Course.
8. Overall performance as adviser - areas of strength, areas needing improvement, attitude, commitment.

A conference with the advisers' coordinator brings out areas of strength and areas where improvement is indicated. A specific plan for future improvement is agreed upon by both adviser and coordinator. At the end of the second quarter, the adviser is evaluated once more on the same dimensions by the coordinator. A conference is scheduled so the adviser's progress and improvement can be discussed.

During Spring Quarter, advisers are evaluated by the coordinator for purposes of determining contract renewal.

Advisers are also evaluated by their assigned students during Winter Quarter. The criteria used are similar to those used during self-evaluation. Advisers ask students to evaluate the University Survey course at the end of each quarter. Advisers may use a University computerized course evaluation or initiate their own.

The services of University College are evaluated periodically through student questionnaires, needs assessments, and informal means. Evaluation is considered a vital part of an on-going program where it is imperative to be in touch with student's expectations and needs.